Links for Smartphones

<http://mclear.co.uk/sites/classdroid/>

<http://apps.inquizitor.com/>

<http://www.androidfreeware.net/download-wikimobile-encyclopedia.html>

A smartphone is a mobile phone that has almost the same features as a computer provides. Talking at the phone and text messaging has become crucial since the phone has begun to exist and that's because it's easier with a mobile phone to communicate. But the scientists wanted to transform the mobile phone as a thing you can't live without. So they started to search for ways to improve the phone's services, such that you can use it all the time. So there it is; they have started to implement the MIDI songs, polyphonic ones, then the player for music appeared, then the MP3 support and many other features. So this is how they have discovered the smartphone by implementing features as internet connections, email system, GPS and many others.

You should ask yourself now: "What roles play **smartphones in education**?"

Referring to our young generation, we should add that there aren't many teenagers that don't own a mobile phone. More than that, you can see at some of them the most sophisticated phones with unbelievable capabilities.

Sometimes I am thinking about how it feels to return to our classic cell phones again? With fewer competences but, the majority of us have to admit that we use or phones just for having conversations and for writing text messages. But scientists don't agree that and for selling their ideas, they have to give a sense to those functions they are implementing so, now, they are trying to convince us that Smartphones can be useful in our education.

For long time ago, I remember that the only thing we did need in our education was just the big blackboard, the used notebooks and many many pencils to use them when writing your kilometer-length homework. Seems nowadays they don't use anymore those standard notebooks, those cheap pencils and everything became more complicated. Instead of notebooks they are using A4 papers, instead of cheap pencils they are using pencils which must have a cool design or else it can't be used and of course, the homework on math isn't solved by them with hard work and paying lot of attention - they now use the computer to solve equations and many others.

But the job with the PC became somehow complicated because they felt the need to use the computer all the time and there were situations in which they couldn't access the machine. So, their parents started to buy them [laptops](http://laptopsdistrict.com/) considering is for their good and education to have one. But as the technology developed, they found out that laptops don't worth anymore. They are heavy and more than this, with a smartphone, you can complete the tasks you did with the help of your computer/laptop and you can also use it as a mobile phone. So, scientists tried to combine the computer features with the ones of the mobile phone and it resulted a big project and of course, and expensive one.

Now let's see how students can now use the **smartphones in education**?

First of all, with the help of internet feature that the smartphone provides, students can have permanently access to some virtual textbooks - because teachers thought it's less expensive to read a freeware book or courses on internet than to pay for buying or copying them on Xerox.

Then the teachers thought it might be helpful to have a virtual catalog for marks and to fill there the students marks, because students' parents don't have enough time to go on school and to verify the kid's situation in education. So with the help of a smartphone connected to the internet, parents may access a database with their kids' marks and presences.

Of course, another impact of internet in education is the interactive courses. So, instead of using a handout with lots of writing, they can use videos and photos from online sources to share with the students and make them understand better.

Because someone thought the courses are important anytime and not all of use may get every time to the course. So with the help of internet, there can be created online classes with online courses and why not online attendance. So, if you cannot get to a course, you just use your smartphone and connect to the course and they guarantee you an attendance of 100%.

For each class and course, teachers may develop some websites for smartphones that can be useful for their students. On these sites, students can register, logon, and then have access to their courses. Teachers can add there some class notifications, notes and others.

The usage of smartphones in education has no limits. There are several ways in which smartphones can help the education to do its job and nowadays technology is often used by students because their teachers use it too and there is no other way to understand the education than following your teacher's example.

**Smartphones join classroom instruction at Lincoln Middle School**

*Photo by Christine Laughren*

Student's in Jenny Guziel's sixth grade science class gather around her for help with a new project on their smartphones.

**Sixth grade class demos Sprint phones, administrators gauging success**

*By Christine Laughren*

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Most students receive a firm reprimand from teachers when even a glimpse of a cell phone is spotted from across the classroom.

But that’s all changing at Lincoln Middle School where a group of three sixth-grade teachers are demonstrating how smartphones are changing the education dynamic in their classrooms.

To call the devices used at Lincoln “cell phones” is really a stretch since they cannot make outgoing calls or take incoming calls. Texting is also blocked, and like most public school computers, Internet access is filtered.

“I like to call them mobile learning devices,” said Jenny Guziel, the sixth-grade teacher who volunteered her class as the guinea pig group for the cell phone initiative.

However, cell phones are exactly what they are. Through Sprint, the district received several smartphones, which have computer-like capabilities built into them. The HTC Touch Pro, HTC Touch Pro 2 and Palm models are being used as a trial basis at the district through the rest of the school year.

As children in Guziel’s sixth-hour science class trickle into the room Thursday, eager volunteers quickly swarm her desk asking to help pass out the phones. Each student has a phone number and is responsible for his or her own phone.

The lesson is to make a line graph, analyze the results and email it to the teacher. This may sound simple, but getting more than 20 students on the same page – so to speak – is difficult.

First students have to “sync” their cell phones, which updates them with the latest information and assignments sent from the teacher. When students “sync” their phone at the end of class all the work they did that day is sent to the teacher.

For last Thursday’s assignment, students visited a [Web site](http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createAgraph/default.aspx) to assist them in creating the graph. Using 10 scores they received while playing their favorite down-time game “Bubble Breaker” the students were to graph the data to see if the game is a game of skill or a game of chance.

By the end of class a handful of students had started uploading their information onto the Web site. Many children had difficulty connecting to the Internet and navigating the Web once they got there. But Guziel said the project would continue the next day and children with Internet access could work on it from home if they wanted.

This is only the sixth assignment utilizing cell phones Guziel has given the students. They have also used the phones to take photos and video in science labs and have completed projects such as word studies on excel spreadsheets.

“We had a rock lab where they had to identify different types of rocks or minerals and we don’t have examples of all of the different kinds for all of the kids, so they could get onto the Internet and see an image,” Guziel said as an example of a science project.  With the Internet, as well as camera and video capabilities there is plenty for students to get distracted by when using the cell phones. But Guziel said that is easily monitored at the end of the day when the students “sync” their phones. She can see exactly what each child did on their cell phone during the class, which discourages students from getting off-track.

“If they’ve been taking pictures they shouldn’t have taken we see that, or if they have been somewhere they shouldn’t have been we see that,” she said. “So everything they do gets sent to the teacher computer.”

There is definitely a learning curve working with the phones, which have only been in the classroom for less than a month. The students and teachers have to become a little more comfortable with the phones before additional subjects can be applied, but the response from instructors and students has been positive.

“The kids quickly get ahead of us and it doesn’t take long for them to operate [the phones] quicker than us,” Guziel said.

One “phone expert” teachers often turn to is student EJ Medvecz. Instructor Deanna Pena said Medvecz seems to have the “magic touch” when it comes to operating the phone. But to Medvecz, it’s no big deal.

“When we started using the phones, I just paid attention to the phone and what it said,” he explained. “Then I kept on finding out how to do stuff.”

Student Brianna Ynclan said, “you have to pay attention because the phone is expensive,” making it easier for her to focus on an assignment. Ynclan also said she likes completing a writing assignments on the phone because what she types is easier for her to read as opposed to her handwriting, and she said she is able to complete assignments faster.

“I think it’s kind of easy,” Ynclan said.

Since the phone is currently only being used for science class Guziel said she is not worried about options such as auto-complete text, which guesses a student’s word before all the characters are entered. She said a science class doesn’t grade based on spelling, and she considers options like auto-complete beneficial for students.

“The more times they see the correct spelling of a word the more likely they are to spell it correctly,” she said of her students.

Pena said like most of the new hands-on technology in the building, such as interactive white boards and digital visual presenters, students are anxious to use the phones as opposed to the traditional classroom atmosphere.

“If we were giving them a science book right now they wouldn’t be as excited,” she said over the chatter of the sixth-graders.

Not only does the instructional dynamic change when the cell phones enter the class, but the social dynamic changes as well – a transformation instructors didn’t anticipate.

Guziel said children who don’t always succeed in a traditional classroom setting find they are valuable asset to their classmates when they can show others how to navigate the phones.

“They’re learning to communicate with all the kids in the room whether they are their best friend or not,” Guziel said. “Everybody was willing to ask for help and they were all willing to give help, that’s a big difference that you see compared to the paper/pencil classroom.

“I like how they are learning to work with each other as a group,” she said. “That’s a life skill that’s hard to teach, that’s important.”

When she started teaching, the technology that assisted her throughout the day was a projector and a sheet hanging from the wall. Nearly two decades later, Guziel is happy to jump at whatever technology she can get her hands on. When the district offers pilot programs such as the Sprint phones she is first to raise her hand.

She said she would love to see more phones being utilized in classrooms and thinks it would be a good investment for the district.

“There’s just so much the students can do [on the phones],” she said. “I don’t think we’ve realized the full potential. They are really carrying a little computer with them and they can go online and the room doesn’t have to be wired for Internet."

Rick Schaffner, Lincoln’s curriculum director, said the district would analyze the success of the phone demo at the end of the year utilizing data collected from a survey given before the program started and post-survey after the program is complete. He said Inkster Schools tried the cell phones for a summer school program and saw an impressive spike in engagement and school performance.

"What they found at the end of their summer school the kids were actually choosing to do their homework over the fun [activities] because the phones were so engaging," he said.

Schaffner said Sprint has offered Lincoln approximately 200 free phones for next year if the district can pay the cost of software licenses.

“If sprint is willing to give us the phones, what I have to come up with is $5,000 for the data services,” he said.

The software, developed by University of Michigan Professor Elliot Soloway, includes programs that let students map concepts, animate their drawings, surf relevant parts of the Internet and integrate their lessons and assignments. It also includes mini versions of Microsoft Word and Excel.

Schaffner said he would look to competitive grants and area foundation donations to pay for the data services if the program proves successful.

“I’m excited to see it take-off, and the hope is that it will spread,” he said.